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HE director plans internal reorganization

by Karen Eizenga, Human Effectiveness Directorate

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — The Air Force Research Laboratory's Human Effectiveness Directorate is experiencing both change and progress under the leadership of its new director, Dr. Hendrick Ruck, who stepped into that role a few months back.

The most recent modification took effect Nov. 1, as the directorate experienced a major divisional reorganization that will provide closer links between divisions that share common technological focus such as acceleration, fatigue management and bio-technology.

"We have been able to pull together divisions that deal with similar programs," Ruck said. "In this way, we can have a single manager responsible for those resources."

The changes are designed to not only streamline management but also to encourage communication and partnership within and between all of the divisions.

Over the last five months, Ruck has admittedly "shaken things up" within the directorate. "My goal was not to change the organization in terms of shape," Ruck said. "But I did want to open it up a bit more, to be more innovative."

His intention isn't to promote out-of-the-box thinking as much as it is to promote the taking of certain risks. "I want to encourage thinking about proposals that could possibly fail," he said. "If you don't fail occasionally, I don't believe you're pushing the state of the art."

With over 15 years of experience in nearly every level of the laboratory, Ruck brought with him a distinct idea of what he wanted the directorate to be and what changes could be made. Two particular areas he would like to advance is providing more significant products for the surgeon general and working more closely with AFRL's Information Directorate in cognitive sciences and decision effectiveness as it pertains to Command, Control and Communication (C3) computer systems.

Increasing his accessibility is another change Ruck has implemented. One week out of every six on Ruck's schedule is committed to conducting his business from each of the two satellite offices located at the Mesa Research Site in Mesa, Ariz., and at Brooks City Base in San Antonio, Texas.

"If I spent all of my time at Wright-Patterson, 60 percent of my people would never see me," Ruck said.

Being on-site helps him maintain a better understanding of active programs and allows more direct access and communication between him and the staff at both sites.

In terms of personnel, Ruck hopes to diversify the Human Effectiveness workforce by sharpening the directorate's focus on hiring minorities. He also anticipates the integration of younger scientists and engineers who are more apt to take risks and who could be cultivated as future leaders within the organization.

"I think younger people are more willing to try something different because they don't yet know it can't be done," Ruck said. "They may know what's changed over time and get us into places where we may have tried and failed previously."

Despite all of the changes he's put in motion, Ruck is confident his staff and personnel will acclimate quickly. "There have been some pretty drastic changes early on," Ruck said. "But when those are in place, we'll let things gel then work with it from there. This is a great directorate, and I plan to make it even better."

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